MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Research Plan For

Ph. D. Programme 2012-13

Depiction of Womanhood in Selected Works of Some Prominent Woman Writers in Indian Writing in English

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES & MANAGEMENT

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Though women have been presented in various ways in Literature since times immemorial, the depiction of womanhood acquires a new benchmark after coming of women writers in the scene. Refuting the patriarchal norms, these female writers have given a new meaning to self-assertion and establishment of identity of women. The Indian female writers, writing in English, have established their own brand of feminism while advocating their cause of 'womanhood'.

The depiction of Womanhood in Indian female writers, however, is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Each writer has developed her own brand in keeping with her philosophy and vision of life. The present research-work aims at evaluating the major works of Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy from the perspective of feminism by analyzing the female protagonists who struggle to assert their individuality and establish their self- identity in a male- dominated socio-cultural set-up. These writers have often raised their voice against social and cultural practices that restricted their freedom. In most cases, the writings are in a confessional and personal note, where their composition acts as a social document as they are themselves sufferers and also agents of social revolution.

Keywords: Patriarchy, feminism, self-assertion, identity, womanhood

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1. Introduction

In the previous times, the novels were focused on the social and political issues of the society. They presented stereotype description of women characters- showing them either as self-sacrificing angel for the sake of their family and near and dear ones or as vamps. These novels were lopsided presentations as they were mostly written by male novelists and they analysed and evaluated women from the point of view of men. After independence, many women writers broke into the literary circuit and they tried to represent the real experiences, feelings, sufferings and emotions of women. These writers tried to reveal the inner psyche, feelings, longings and actual experiences of the Indian women. In fact, in the works of these women artists, the concept of womanhood acquired a new dimension. Womanhood has now become asserting their individuality as women without being defensive for or apologetic about being a woman. It is about evaluating their status vis-a-vis the traditional patriarchal society. It is all about their real problems, real dreams and real aspiration. It is about their yearnings for liberty and getting more rights. It is also about rebellion or at least about protest against the male-chauvinist mentality. Still we must say that women writers necessarily need not be anti-men. They are just against unjust male-dominance. They want to achieve their rightful place in society so that they can be equal players in socio-cultural development.

The selection of authors for the proposed thesis is done on the parameters of:

- The genre of their writing
- Their perspective of feminism

The proposed research work is designed to evaluate the works of three novelists of different perspective of feminism- Anita Desai with her “feminine sensitivity”, Shashi Despande with her “Indian feminism” and Arundhati Roy with her “radical feminism”. It will also assess the poetry of Kamala Das to bring out a compact image of womanhood as reflected in the works of Indian writers writing in English.

1.1 Introduction to Kamala Das and her works

Kamala Suraiyya (pen name Madhavikutty) was born on 31 March 1934 in Punnayurkulam, District Thrissur, Kerala to V. M. Nair, a former managing editor of the widely circulated Malayalam daily *Mathrubhumi* and Nalapat Balamani Amma, a famous Malayali poetess. Her fame in Kerala is primarily based on her short stories and autobiography while she is well known for her fiery poems in English.

She got married at the age of 15 to a bank officer Madhava Das, who encouraged her writing interests and as a result, she started writing and publishing both in English and in Malayalam. Her open and honest treatment of female sexuality, free from any sense of guilt, not only infused her writing with power but also marked her as an iconoclast in her generation.

Das' first book of poetry, *Summer In Calcutta* was a breath of fresh air in Indian English poetry. She wrote chiefly of love, its betrayal, and the consequent anguish and gave up the certainties offered by an archaic and somewhat sterile, aestheticism for an independence of mind and body at a time when Indian poets were still governed by "19th-century diction, sentiment and romanticised love." Her second book of poetry, *The Descendants* was even more explicit urging women to surrender to the advances of male. Her daring autobiography, *My Story* was published at the age of 42 years. Kamala Das has written on a diverse range of topics, often disparate- from the story of a poor old servant, about the sexual disposition of upper middle class women living near a metropolitan city or in the middle of the ghetto.

Das embraced Islam in 1999 after being asked by her lover Sadiq Ali, an Islamic scholar and a Muslim League MP and assumed the name Kamala Surayya. Though never politically active before, she launched a national political party, **Lok Seva Party**, which was aimed at providing refuge to orphaned mothers and promotion of secularism. In 1984, she unsuccessfully contested in the Indian Parliament elections.

Kamala Das has been nominated and shortlisted for Nobel Prize for Literature in 1984. She has several awards to her credit- Award of Asian PEN anthology (1964), Kerala Sahitya Academy Award (1969), Sahitya Academy Award (1985), Asian Poetry Prize (1998), Kent Award for English Writing from Asian Countries (1999), Vayalar Award (2001), Muttathu Varkey Award

(2006) and Ezhuthachan Puraskaram (2009). In addition, she was granted Honorary D.Litt by the University of Calicut in the year 2006.

Her famous works include *The Sirens (1964), Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973), My Story (1976), Alphabet of Lust (novel published in 1977), The Anamalai Poems (1985), Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories (1992), Only the Soul Knows How to Sing (1996), Yaa Allah (2001), Tonight,This Savage Rite (1979), My Mother At Sixty-six (1999) and My Grandmother House (1999).*

Kamala Das explores the plight of women in India and the world. She articulates the despair and longing of fellow women through her writings. She protests against the oppression of the female class and wants to emancipate woman from the stereotypes of her colonized status. Her works basically focus on woman and the revealation of female experiences, be it trauma of an unhappy marriage or humiliation of a desireless surrender in sex or disgust at the male domination.

Introduction to Shashi Deshpande and her works

Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka and is the daughter of the late Adya Rangachar "Sriranga," a famous Kannada playwright. She had her education in Bombay and Bangalore and obtained her Post Graduate Degree in English from Mysore University. Her career began with the publication of a collection of short stories entitled "*The Legacy*" in 1978. So far, she has published ten novels- *The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), If I Die Today (1982), Come up and be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows (1983), That Long Silence (1988), The Binding Vine (1992), A Matter of Time (1996), Small Remedies (2001) and Moving On (2004), The Country of Deceit (2008).* In addition to these, she has also published several books for children in English and has also written the screenplay of the Hindi feature film *Drishti*. She won the Thirumati Rangamal Prize for *Roots and Shadows and* the Sahitya Akademi Award *for That Long Silence* in 1990.

The works of Shashi Deshpande have been translated into several languages such as German, Russian, Finnish, Danish etc. She is a writer of popular taste and as of critical applauds. The film 'Band Jharoke', by famous film director Prem Karanth, is based on Deshpande's first novel,

The Dark Holds no Terrors. She is one among the most discussed writers in India and a lot of research work is being done on various aspects of her literary genius.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande present the women in changing times. Her novels are a reflection of the real life struggles of middle class women. By presenting women protagonists as progressive and assertive, she beautifully exposes the patriarchal domination and the socio-cultural mind-set. There are repeated instances in her works to ascertain that the problems of women result from long process of socio-cultural conditioning, personal experiences and impressions. A continuous negotiation between the socio- cultural norms and individual urges which firmly establish her novels as a discourse of muted women's culture can be noticed in her works. Marriage, in fact, becomes only another enclosure for women that restrict the movement towards autonomy and self realization. It fails to provide them the love and freedom and therefore, the protagonists resort to extra-marital relations. For example, Jaya in *The Long Silence* shows inclination towards Kamat who encourages her for writing in original and real way. In *the Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita flirts Busszi.

1.3 Introduction to Anita Desai and her works

Anita Mazumdar Desai born on 24 June 1937 in Mussoorie, India, is an Indian novelist and the Emerita John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her mother was a German and father a Bengali businessman. She graduated in English literature in 1957 from the Miranda House, University of Delhi. She has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times; she received a Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain.* She has also won the British Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, a once-in-a-lifetime book award for *The Village by the Sea*.

Desai published her first novel, *Cry The Peacock* in 1963. *Clear Light of Day*, published in 1980 *is her* most autobiographical work as it is set during her coming of age and also in the same neighbourhood in which she grew up. In 1984, she published *In Custody* – about an Urdu poet in his declining days – which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. In 1993, she became a creative writing teacher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her novel, *The Zigzag Way*, set in

20th-century Mexico, appeared in 2004 and her latest collection of short stories, *The Artist of Disappearance* was published in 2011.

Anita Desai also reflects the experiences and outlooks of the middle class society in her works. Desai's novels are rooted in the Indian culture and her protagonists have strong love-hate relationship with their mother. The impressions of childhood play the leading role in Desai's novels. In her works, the husband is projected like a sheltering tree and marriage is considered the promised end in the traditional society. In *Clear Light of Day*, Tara marries Bakul only for escaping from parental family and society. The women characters of Anita Desai cannot find solution of their problems but it is Bim, the protagonist of the novel *Clear Light of Day*, who finds the solution. She faces the society and tradition without alienation. She establishes her identity with practical wisdom and boldness. She earns her livelihood and also supports her family. Maya in *Cry, The Peacock* and Monisha in *Voices in the City* are unable to solve their problems. They are very sensitive. Monisha is so sensitive that finally she commits suicide. The temporary withdrawal of women characters from the society can be seen in the novels of Anita Desai.

1.4 Introduction to Arundhati Roy and her works

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, was born on 24 November 1961, in Shillong, Meghalaya to a Bengali Hindu from Calcutta- Rajib Roy and Mary Roy, a Malayali Syrian Christian women's rights activist from Kerala. An Indian author and political activist, Roy is popularly known for the 1998 Booker Prize for Fiction-winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) and for her involvement in human rights and environmental causes. Roy was educated at Kottayam, Kerala and then Tamil Nadu. She then studied architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi. She is best known for the following works: *The God of Small Things* (1997), *The End of Imagination(* 1998), *The Cost of Living(* 1999), *The Greater Common Good* (1999), *Power Politics (*2002), *War Talk (*2003), *An Ordinary Person's Guide To Empire* (2004), *Power in the Age of Empire(* 2004), *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy(* 2004), *The Shape of the Beast: Conversations with Arundhati Roy (*2008), *Listening to*

*Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy (*2010), *Broken Republic: Three Essays (*2011), *Walking with the Comrades(* 2011) and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*.

Arundhati Roy is an obvious example of the bold and blunt presentation of the prevailing social evils, prejudices, rivalry, hypocrisy, subjugation of women and finally their revolt against the customs and orthodox mentality of the males. *The God of Small Things* is a true expression of these aspects. The female characters such as Ammu, Rahel, Baby Kochamma, Margaret and Mammachi represent the various mentalities of women. Mammachi, a byproduct of the male dominated society, is a typical orthodox woman. She herself suffers from the torments of her husband. She considers her son Chako as another strong male protector. She exhibits double standards in treating her children- Ammu and Chacko. Her attitude towards her daughter-Ammu is condemnable. She, in fact, tortures her. But, Ammu remains strong willed. She rebels against the tyranny and double standards of the patriarchal society. Unlike her mother, she discards the norms and barriers imposed by the society. She treats her daughter and son equally. There is a strong affectionate bond among them. Rahel is also portrayed as an intelligent, indomitable, unorthodox strong woman who is full of rebellious attitude towards unjust, corrupt, prejudiced orthodox society. Ammu and Rahel suffer greatly all types of inhuman treatment and injustices but they never accept the dominance. They are bold and daring enough who struggle continuously for the sake of liberty and identity.

Thus, Roy, Desai, Deshpande and Kamala Das project the need, desire, and struggle of women for establishing their identity and freedom. These novelists catch the attention of the society towards the real demand and life of women. They understand the feelings, emotions and desires and pangs of women. Therefore, they portray the psyche and mentality of women more realistically than the male novelists.

2. Literature Review

A number of works on the feminine aspects of writers like Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy etc. and have been done in the recent past. A few of them are briefly mentioned below.

2.1 Works done on Kamala Das

Bhasin and Srivastava (2013) minutely analyze the poems of Kamala Das in *"Pragmatic analysis of Kamala Das Poetry"* which reflect the subjugation of woman, as a man wants, to keep alive the myth of his superiority which leads to bias against women in all spheres of life. According to Kamala Das, even the act of sex itself has the male as aggressor and women as recipient. Several of her poems point to the implicit gender bias that affects the lives of women in all spheres of life, all over the world. Kamala Das longs for true love and affection. Throughout her life, she dared to stand on her own and express flawlessly her physical need.

Kamble (2013) mirrors the life of Kamla Das in all her nakedness in her article "*Kamla Das as a Controversial but Honest Poetess*". She reveals how her life has been long drawn battle against cultural and religious orthodoxy. With a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context, Kamala Das expresses her need for love. The uniqueness in her poetry is the frustration of a woman devoid of sexual satisfaction.

Kishore and Chaudhary (2011) in their work "C*onfessional Aspects in the Prose Work of Kamala Das"* discuss the confessional and cerebral English literature poet Kamala Das who gives her view about woman exploitation, loveless relationship, and woman's instinctive factions for men, and disillusionment. They explain the confessional aspect of love, body and man-woman relationship. Kamala Das rejects the way of fellow female writers who try to tackle the problem of existence avoiding any task about their bodies and confronts her body with unparalled boldness and honesty. Her woman is strong and weak, whores and mother, lovers and wives. Kamala Das portrays herself into her female protagonists.

2.2 Works done on Shashi Deshpande

Ambika & Latha (2012) seek to focus primarily on the psychological exploration of the inner mind of women characters in their article entitled "*Tradition Vs Transition: A Psychological Study of Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine"***.** The writer being a woman dives deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues, which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances.

Bite (2012) talks about domestic relations in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande. Shashi Deshpande deals in the above stories with the daughter and mother relationship. Often she compares the present with the past and shows that even in the modern context there has been no change in the relationship. She sometimes sarcastically comments on the situation. There are seven stories and they deal exclusively with the daughter-mother relationship.

Devi and Mahalakshmi (2012) make a contrastive study of Shashi Despande and Shobha De in *"Depiction of Women in Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De's Works"***.** They make an attempt to depict how the attitudes and behavior of women differs according to the society she belongs to, by highlighting the works of Shashi Deshpande and Shobha de.

Kapoor and Singh (2012) in her article **"***A Feminist Narratological Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence"* makes use of the first person homodiegetic narrator to build a sense of intimacy and empathy with the reader, and also to add to the touch of real life authenticity which facilitates the reader's sense of identification with the situations depicted in the novel. *That Long Silence* is a representative sample of women's writing and it exposes stereotypical images of women as meaningless constructions of the male imagination.

Padmarani Rao (2012) deals with the women characters in "*The Literary Corpus of Shashi Deshpande"***.** She points out how with a style marked by economy, brevity, concentration and vivid clarity, Shashi Deshpande presents the life of middleclass Indian women in her fiction. The changed post modern society and the adjustments that a woman has to make to fit into the paradigm, with a comparatively traditional cultural outlook is wonder fully presented by Shashi Deshpande in her creative writing. The heroines of Deshpande strive for and obtain certain

autonomy and there by realize their immense potentialities for action and self-actualization. Their return home is not defeatism but the triumph of the independence of women. They learn to live in the modern society with self-identity and self-realization.

Sinha (2012) studies women characters of Shashi Deshpande in "*A Study of Shashi Deshpande's Women Characters: Feminism in Search of Identity"***.** She takes into account the essay "Of Kitchens and Goddesses", where Deshpande experiences an epiphany and she suddenly feels that female space is rigidly confined. She talks about how Deshpande's fiction focuses on the women characters trapped up in a conflict between tradition and modernity. She highlights the gap between the prejudice stricken traditional women who prefers her daughter's marriage to career and the modern, educated, empowered women who prioritizes her personal opinion and empowerment.

Nayak (2011) in "*The Making of a New Woman"* takes into account the works of Shashi Deshpande. She says Indian women, unlike their western counterparts, have always been socially and psychologically oppressed, sexually colonized and biologically subjugated against a male-dominant social set-up. Any attempt by a woman to rise above the oppressive forces rooted in the middle class margins has either been curbed mercilessly or ignored in the name of social dignity. Shashi Deshpande all through the gamut of her ever expanding creative horizon always makes it a point to provide a separate space for her characters.

Ramachandran (2011) discusses the expertise of Shashi Despande as a novelist in "*Shashi Deshpande's Craft as a Novelist"*. She takes into account *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. She has created ripples in the society of male domination by taking women as women seriously in her novels. She points out how Deshpande takes us inside the consciousness of her women characters to present their plight, fears, dilemmas, contradictions and ambitions.

2.3 Works done on Anita Desai

Sarkar (2012) in her paper entitled **"***An Ecological Quest of Self in Anita Desai's Where Shall We Go This Summer?"* portrays the effect of existential problems on a sensitive mind like Sita's that intends to grab tightly the closeness and magic of nature, the identity of a female soul in a

cruel world. The modern civilization being exiled from nature forces her to be unwilling to give birth to her fifth child and makes her to search for the magic of Nature by taking shelter in Manori Island with her two other children. Sita struggles to break herself free from the burden and the problems of contemporary humdrum existence and sets out in search of a complete female identity. Her present paper aims to show how Sita in her journey of the quest of self goes through a metamorphosis as well as how she becomes acquainted with the truth about her identity. While discussing her journey towards self realization this paper also attempts to present the ways in which ecology helped her in this quest including the author's successful use of myth and symbol.

Sen (2012) in his article *"Bondage", "Patriarchy", and "Feminine"in Anita Desai's Novels: A Silent Revolt"* traces the feminist way of portraying women in Anita Desai's two most popular and widely acknowledged novels- CRY, the peacock and where shall we go this summer. Herein, she looks at how in post colonial period women English writers of India have dealt with the theme of "woman ppression". The paper looks at the dynamics of Indian English women writers concern and feminist thoughts in the writings in post independent India.

Volna (2005) in her article "*Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting and the Condition of Women"* presents a critical culture-based reading of Desai's novel Fasting, Feasting, a work that deals with the condition of women (not only) in India. Volná analyses both the female and the male sensitivity in the novel where Desai makes use of a double symbolic of food expressed throughout the novel by (not only literal) hunger. In Volná's view, Desai's Hindu imagery of sun/fire as patriarchal power and water, which, as the counterpart of the sun and fire, represents recognition of women's condition and a possible way to liberation represent crucial aspects of the novel. Volná analyses the metaphorical voyage towards progress of the Indian Hindu girl/woman Uma, the main character of the novel, with respect to sun/fire milestones, as well as those of water, and as related to persons who accompany her. As Volná argues, Uma at the end achieves recognition of her condition although not full liberation. Further, a parallel pilgrimage of Arun, also through the countryside of sun, fire, and water, is analysed through Arun's recognition of the suffering of both American women/girls and of his sister Uma. Volná

concludes that it is only through the synthesis of both female and male recognition and effort can women be released from the oppressive conditions of patriarchy.

2.4 Works done on Arundhati Roy

Al-Quaderi and Saiful Islam (2011) in *"Complicity and Resistance: Women in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things"* discuss the peculiar part played by the women characters in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. They point out that the resistance against gender oppression leads to resistance against caste, class oppression and spurring on anti-colonial thought and actioni. Such variants of resistant rebellion are articulated through the examination of the marital and inter-gender relations of Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Rahel.

Subhashini (2011) in her article "*Feminine Sensitivity with reference to The God of Small Things"* talks about evolution of feminism as a revolt against "conservative perception of women's issues".

3. Description of Broad Area/Topic

The research will try to explore the different dimensions of the portrayal of women characters in the prominent works of Kamala Das, Shashi Dehspande, Anita Desai and Arun dhati Roy.

The thesis will consist of following chapters:

Chapter-I	:	Introduction
Chapter-II	:	A representation of women characters in the works of Kamala Das, Shashi Despande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy
Chapter-III	:	A comparative study of the impassioned quest for Identity

Chapter-IV : A comparison of the struggles of the heroines in gaining their individuality

Chapter-V : Conclusion

Chapter I: Introduction

It is designed to give a brief introduction to the status of women in the Indian Society and the evolution of feminism with a view to evaluate and analyze the prominent works of Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy. This chapter is expected to outline the literary theories and parallel political movements in India for the emancipation of women.

Part II of the chapter plans to deal with a brief history of Female Indian English Writers with special focus on Kamala Das, Shashi Despande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy and their contribution to the world literature. Also their position in the history of Indian English Literature would be taken into account.

Chapter II: A representation of women characters in the works of Kamala Das, Shashi Despande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy

Chapter Two proposes to represent the women characters as have been portrayed by these writers. The portrayal is likely to be unclouded by false beliefs or misconceptions. Shashi Despande's - *The Dark Holds no Terrors and That Long Silence*, Anita Desai's -*Where shall we go this Summer, Cry, the Peacock, Clear Light of the Day*, Kamala Das's-*An Introduction, The Freaks, The Dance of the Eunachs, The Forest Fire, The Sunshine Cat* and Arundhati Roy's- *The God of Small Things* would be taken into account for the study.

Chapter-III: A comparative study of the impassioned quest for Identity

This Chapter is planned to focus on the heroine's unquenchable thirst for identity in the works of all the four female writers namely Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati

Roy and makes a comparison of the same. All the women protagonists reveal a fervent quench for their own identity. In the case of Shashi Despande, the protagonists after learning the difficulties of being a woman and because of situational compulsions return back to their parental house where they remember the socio-cultural structures which made them into what they have become. It is at this point that they come to realize the forces at work. They use to think, mother – father – brother -grandparents as their culprits– but the new realization make them understand that the problem is embedded in socio-cultural norms formulated by religions and politics of the world. Same is the case with the protagonists of Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy.

Kamala Das gives a realistic portrayal of her own hopes, aspirations, frustrations and ranting in her poems. Her open and candid treatment to the female sexuality without any sense of guilt or shame makes her a bold and daring poetess. She makes no attempt to conceal the sensuality of the human form; her works celebrate their joyous potential while acknowledging the concurrent dangers**.** She urges the women to give their men 'what makes you a woman'. She leaves no stone unturned to expose the subjugation suffered by all women in patriarchal society and also reveals that it is not only she who is in quest for true love but every Indian woman has the same fate. Her negative and dismissive image of a man in her mind as an instrument of corruption, a symbol of corrosion and the demolisher of the female chastity, is not hers alone but holds true for every Indian Woman.

Chapter-IV: A comparison of the struggles of the heroines in gaining their individuality

Chapter Four is formulated to deal with the struggles of the protagonists in gaining their individuality. A comparison of the struggles by the protagonists in the works of all the writers would then be made and analysis would be done to see the similarities and differences in the types of struggles faced. It is expected to show how hard they struggle for the same undeterred by the opposition that they face from their near and dear ones. They learn to lead their lives in their own ways.

Chapter-V: Conclusion

This chapter proposes to conclude the contribution of all these female writers to feminism. It is a significant statement on the feministic issues taken by these writers and their relevance to the present times. The chapter is also expected to encapsulate the major points of the four writers that the study would reveal.

4. Objectives of the Study

Feminist writing is an emerging area in literature that has enormous scope for further research. It has literary as well as social relevance. While adding substantial information in this area we are definitely going to enrich the existing pool of information as well as adding new perspectives to it. It is also going to throw more light on the nature and status of women in the male dominated Indian society. At the same time the research on feminist studies may lead to women empowerment thereby giving them their due status which they so richly deserve. In addition, the work of Indian women writers is significant in making the society aware of the women's needs and demands in providing a medium for self expression and assertion.

The research work is undertaken with the following objectives:

- To conduct exhaustive literature review in the area of feminism.
- To delineate the image of woman as reflected in the works of some prominent woman writers, writing in English
- To analyze and evaluate this image in historical as well as social context.
- To explore the emerging trends of feminism, such as assertion of individuality, quest for identity, tendency of rebellion, frustration and isolation.
- To assess the nature of feminist sensibility or feminism in the works of four selected writers, viz. Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy.
- To add to the existing pool of knowledge in the area of Feminism in general and Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy in particular.

- To create ground for the empowerment of women thus giving them their due status which they so greatly deserve.

5. Methodology

The basic methodologies that have been implied in carrying out this research work are the following:

1. In order to apply the analytical and descriptive methods to the research, the primary sources such as the original works of these writers as well as the secondary sources available in the form of criticism would be used.

2. Some of the important libraries of the country such as the British Council, libraries of Delhi University, Jawahar Lal Nehru University and English and Foreign Languages University would be visited to accumulate a large amount of study material and to encompass the views of the various researchers.

3. In addition, interviews of the four female Indian writers along with the views of leading critics and other authors writing about same subject would be taken into consideration and such inputs would be utilized in completing the proposed work.

4. The subject matter would be analyzed in the perspective of feminist theory.

6. Proposed/expected outcome of the research

- The research is expected to investigate various aspects such as themes, craftsmanship etc of Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy so as to establish the nature of feminism in the works of the above authors.

- It is envisaged that exploring the different facets of feminism in the author by throwing more light on certain unexplored arena of her genius establishes her feminist credentials even more firmly.

- The writers' portrayal of her protagonists in the perspective of Indian Concept of Feminism is expected to be brought into critical discussion.

- In the light of the novelists' perception and portrayal of various issues related to Indian women, the research work is also expected to analyze and assess the modern Indian society with special reference to the condition of women therein.

- The thesis is sure to add significantly to the existing pool of knowledge on feminism and will contribute towards establishing Indian Writing in English in its rightful position in the contemporary word Literature.

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